

+Come, Holy Spirit and fill us with the FIRE of your love.

I know that seems a bit over the top, but the first time I heard Msgr. Peter Dunne, at a gathering of the Omaha Cursillo Community, call down the Holy Spirit in that way, I knew, without exaggeration, nothing would ever be the same. There was a sincerity and conviction of a life living in the Holy Spirit that did more than shock our ears, it moved our souls. I say this in the plural because I was hardly the only one to recognize it.

Years later, this Holy Priest led my class's pre-ordination retreat. One of us had asked him why he prayed to the Holy Spirit in such a seemingly theatrical way.

What he said was: "From the beginning this third person of the Triune God, was never timid, never complacent. It is the Christian who has become timid. As for me... I refuse to try and tame the Spirit of God"

We can see in our scriptures today that the Holy Spirit is a force of God to be recognized and accepted on its terms, not our own.

This is the Spirit that empowered eleven cowering men huddled in an upper room out of fear, to step out and proclaim the Gospel in such a powerful way that the faith spread nearly as swiftly as the tongues of fire parted to rest on their own heads.

My childhood understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit was that the early Church needed that extra boost to spread the faith, but now that the Church is established, we don't need these gifts of the Holy Spirit.

As an adult, I learned and experienced, just the opposite. That reliance on the Holy Spirit, and the manifestation of its sevenfold gifts, as well as the thousands of particular gifts given to the Baptized and Confirmed, are ESSENTIAL and LIFE GIVING for the Church and all of the individuals that make up the body of Christ.

Over the centuries, the Church has been attacked and maligned and disrupted by persecutions, fractures, heresies, and scandals, yet in the Spirit of God, it has more than survived, it has blossomed and thrived.

My friends, we have experienced a time that the gathering of Christians has been suspended by governments concerned over the spread of a small, tiny and, as yet, incurable virus.

It is fitting that on this great Feast of Pentecost, celebrating the birth of the Church by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that we gather together for the first time in a long time here in this place. It is a sort of re-birth of a somewhat “different” Church, at least for a while, in regards to how we gather.

But we ARE gathering. And no government, no social manipulation of mankind to the rest of humanity, no social distancing, no facemasks, no fear can hold back the Holy Spirit. Only you and I, by our own timidity and sin can quell the consuming fire of the love of God in the Spirit, sent by the Father, and promised to us by Jesus Christ.

Right now, I believe, it is imperative to call on the Holy Spirit. It is time for the Church to be even more open directly to the workings of the Holy Spirit. It is time for individual Catholic Christians to enter more fully into the life of the Holy Spirit with neither fear or regard for what the Spirit of God may ask of us.

One of the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit is discernment. It is wise to examine, in prayer, what the will of the Holy Spirit is in our situations. And if we find it in any way to be uncharitable, to be violent, to be chaotic or divisive or immoral, we can be certain that this is not the prompting of the HOLY Spirit because God cannot be untrue to Himself.

But if our discernment affirms to us that the prompting is holy and good and loving, even though the way may be difficult, rest assured, that whatever it might be, it will be of God.

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